

Text: Heb. 10:32-39

Title: "Some things believers need in times like these"

Time: 2/14/2016 am

Place: NBBC

Intro - If you are familiar with the New Boston Baptist Church prayer bulletin, you know that we have been praying for persecuted believers for some time. We were thankful for a recent answer to those prayers in the release of Pastor Saeed Abedini from an Iranian prison.

More recently, a number of Americans have been added to our list of persecuted believers who need our prayers. Aaron and Melissa Kline lost their bakery after refusing to bake a cake for a homosexual wedding and had their bank accounts seized by authorities in Oregon just before Christmas. Baronelle Stutzman would not create flower arrangements for the homosexual wedding of a man who had bought Mother's Day flowers from her for years. He sued her, and she lost her business. Kelvin Cochran, the fire chief of the city of Atlanta, wrote a Sunday School lesson for his class about the sin of homosexuality, and city authorities fired him for what he wrote. Pastor Ken Miller failed to recognize the parental rights of a lesbian partner as a female father or a second mother of some kind, siding with the birth mother over concern for the child's safety. He will begin serving a 27 month jail sentence next month. Airforce Senior Master Sergeant Philip Monk returned to his Texas base from deployment to find a new lesbian commanding officer. That superior pressed Monk for his verbal support of gay marriage, and when Monk refused, he was relieved of duty. Football coach, Joe Kennedy, who had started every game for years by kneeling for prayer at the 50 yard line was told not to pray. He refused and lost his job. I could go on for the entire message this morning.

We have a passage before us for times like these. The Jewish-Christian recipients of this letter had faced some hard times in the past, and they were in need of bracing themselves for a return to that kind of suffering.

Is it any wonder that believers are beginning to suffer for their faith again in our land? This is Satan's world, and he hates believers. The Author of our passage loved believers then, and He loves them now. In this passage He tells us about some things that believers need in times like these.

I. We need a faith that saves the soul (v. 39).

Appl: I begin at the end of the passage this morning, because I believe that the most significant need a person has in times like these is addressed at the end of this passage. The passage talks about two categories of people, and each of us this morning belongs to one of these two categories: (1) those who draw back unto perdition, and (2) those who believe to the saving of the soul.

Ill: Oil and water are certainly different substances, and it is also true that they do not mix. This is true because of their makeup - what they are. Water is made up of molecules that have polarity, a positive and a negative charge. This is because the two hydrogen atoms that connect with the oxygen one in water are on the same side of the molecule. Electrons move slower on one side than on the other, and so that creates the positive charge on one side and the negative on the other. Oil molecules lack this polarity, so they are not attracted to water molecules the way that water molecules are to each other. They are two different substances, and their differences mean that they do not mix.

Appl: That is the kind of difference our author describes for us between these two categories of people. They are different to the point that they do not mix. We are in one category or the other. The Lord Jesus used this word *perdition* when He described two roads that do not crisscross (Matt. 7:13, "Enter ye in at the strait gate: for wide is the gate, and broad is the way, that leadeth to *destruction*, and many there be which go in thereat: because strait is the gate, and narrow is the way, which leadeth unto life, and few there be that find it.").

This morning each of us is on one of those two roads; we are in one of these two categories; we are either water or oil; we are either believing to the salvation of our souls, or we are drawing back unto perdition, a Christless eternity in hell. Which are you?

The wonderful thing about the power of Christ is that He can change water into wine. He can even change water into oil. How do we get on the right road? We enter the right gate, which is Jesus Christ. How do we belong to the right category of saved souls? We believe on Him for eternal life. Do you believe that you are saved from your sins because He died and rose again for you? Have you ever trusted Him for salvation? In times like these, we need a faith that saves the soul.

II. We need a reminder that inspires suffering (vv. 32-34).

III: New Boston history includes the settlement of Scotch Presbyterians here. The first white man to settle in New Boston was a Scotch Presbyterian by the name of Thomas Smith. He did so in 1726. Scottish Presbyterians trace their history back to the start of the Protestant Reformation in Scotland, and what they find there at the very beginning is

the martyrdom of a man named Patrick Hamilton. At the age of 14, Hamilton was in school in Paris where he was exposed to the newly available writings of Martin Luther. He returned to Scotland in 1524 to teach at the Roman Catholic University of St. Andrews. Luther's books were banned in Scotland in 1525, and Tyndale's English New Testament became available in 1526. God saved Hamilton, and he fled to Germany soon after. Hamilton soon felt the call of God to return to Scotland and preach the gospel. Soon he was arrested by the Roman Catholic bishop, who had given the preacher an extra month of freedom to preach to ensure that he had enough evidence to convict him. That was a mistake, for many souls were saved out of Roman Catholicism during that month. On February 29, 1528, the Roman Church burned Hamilton at the stake. The fire kept going out, and the process took six hours before finally killing this martyr. Afterward, Roman Catholic authorities found themselves lamenting that "the reek of Mister Patrick Hamilton has infected as many as it blew upon." From then on the Protestant Reformation in Scotland was unstoppable.

Appl: It is possible to trace the history of Presbyterians from that man to the Community Church we have on the town common today. As a member of the Presbyterian Church U.S.A. denomination, they now believe in the ordination of lesbians and gay marriage, and they are powerless to stand with any of the persecuted Americans I mentioned earlier. What happened? Well, at some point along the way someone forgot about Patrick Hamilton and John Knox, and they decided that the suffering was no longer worth it.

I believe that these Hebrew believers had lived through what Luke calls in Acts, "the persecution that arose about Stephen" (Acts 11:19). It is described in Acts 8:1-4. Not only did the word spread, but also God would save the chief persecutor (Acts 26:9-18). But now, if my speculation is correct,

Paul had been martyred by Nero, and the victories of the past were beginning to be forgotten. Our author reminds these believers of their former willingness to suffer. He mentions four things by way of reminder:

1. They had suffered public reproaches and afflictions (v. 33a). The Greek word translated *gazingstock* is the word we get our word *theatre* from. This was a very public humiliation. Moses was an example of this kind of suffering (Heb. 11:24-26). And notice that Moses's reproaches were the reproaches of Christ (Heb. 13:12-13). Suffering this way is part of what it means to be a Christian.

2. They had suffered by identifying with those who were suffering more than they (v. 33b-34a). If our church were to suffer persecution, would there be enough evidence to convict you of being in fellowship with this church and its cause? We need to be willing to identify with those who suffer for Christ. Jesus takes this issue very personally, "I was in prison, and ye came unto me" (Matt. 25:36).

3. They had suffered the loss of their possessions (v. 34b).

Ill: I would like to return to the case in Oregon of the bakers Aaron and Melissa Klein. They have been ordered to pay more than \$135,000 to a lesbian couple in damages because they refused to bake a cake for their wedding. The fine carries with it a 9% interest penalty should it not be paid on time. A few days prior to Christmas, the Oregon Labor Commissioner ordered that the Klein's family bank accounts be seized. They took \$7000.

Appl: What are we willing to lose for the sake of the gospel? The answer to that question will always be determined by whether or not you believe the truth we find at the end of verse 34: "knowing in yourselves that ye have in heaven

a better and an enduring substance [possession].” There is something that I have that the world can never take away, which is far better than anything they could possibly offer me to replace it. Do we believe that? We are about to find out. We need especially to be reminded of this to be inspired to suffer for Christ.

III. We need a confident endurance that depends on Christ (v. 35-36).

Ill: It was said of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin, “Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were unlearned and ignorant men, they marveled; and they took knowledge of them, that they had been with Jesus” (Acts 4:13).

Appl: Hebrews speaks of this boldness here (v. 35a). The word is used 4 times in Hebrews – it is something we have as we enter the holiest by the blood of Jesus (10:19); it is something that characterizes our prayers before the throne of grace (4:16); and it is something that we must hold fast firm unto the end (3:6). In our passage, we are told that it is something that brings great reward (vv. 35b-36). What can make suffering and enduring as a Christian worth it all? That great reward can and will. Jesus put it this way, “Blessed are ye, when men shall hate you, and when they shall separate you from their company, and reproach you, and cast out your name as evil, for the Son of man’s sake. Rejoice in that day, and leap for joy: for behold, your reward is great in heaven” (Luke 6:22-23).

IV. We need a faith that lives righteously (vv. 37-38).

Appl: We are going to learn some things in the days ahead about the faith that lives righteously. We see here that this

faith believes that Christ will come again and make what is wrong right, what is crooked straight. This was Habakkuk's hope as he languished under the oppression of Israel's enemies, and it is our hope as the enemies of our church become stronger and stronger. It is a faith that understands God's timetables – He is not late; everything is right on schedule; our suffering is but for a little while in light of eternal reward. And it is a faith, which the next chapter tells us, holds firm when tested as the substance of things hoped for and the evidence of things not seen.

Conclusion: Are you ready for times like these? With a faith that saves the soul, with a memory of those who suffered before us, with a confident endurance dependent on Christ, and with faith to live righteously in response to all these promises, we can answer by God's grace that yes, we are ready for times like these. The Scotch Presbyterian, John Knox, encouraged his students in difficult times: "Love God, be faithful, bless Scotland." May we be ready in our difficult day to love God more than self, to be faithful to His work, and to bless New Boston and beyond by the power of His Spirit.

“A man came – I think it was actually in Philadelphia – on one occasion to the great George Whitefield and asked if he might print his sermons. Whitefield gave this reply; he said, ‘Well, I have no inherent objection, if you like, but you will never be able to put on the printed page the lightning and the thunder.’ That is the distinction – the sermon, and the ‘lightning and the thunder.’ To Whitefield this was of very great importance, and it should be of very great importance to all preachers, as I hope to show. You can put the sermon into print, but not the lightning and the thunder. That comes into the act of preaching and cannot be conveyed by cold print. Indeed it almost baffles the descriptive powers of the best reporters.”

– David Martin Lloyd-Jones,

*Preachers and Preaching*